

Walpole Meeting House
Bristol, Maine
WALPOLE

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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

District of Maine

Historic American Buildings Survey
Josiah T. Tubby, District Officer
537 Congress Street, Portland, Maine

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"WALPOLE MEETING HOUSE"

Bristol, Lincoln County, Maine
WALPOLE

Owners

Town of Bristol

Date of Erection

1772

Builder

Built by the Town of Bristol

Present Condition

In 1872, the interior of the church was repaired and the exterior was painted. No alterations in the original construction of the building have been made.

Description

The building faces South West and is situated well above the thoroughfare between Damariscotta and Bristol. It is nearly square in plan, forty-two feet six inches by thirty-two feet six inches, two stories high with a gallery around three sides. The roof is gabled. The exterior walls of the building are shingled. There is no exterior decoration except around the doorways. There are three entrances, one of which has double doors and is thought to have been used as the main entrance. The two side doors are different in design and both are interesting. The building is set low to the ground on a granite foundation. Windows have twenty-four lights of six by eight inch glass.

The interior of the building is beautifully decorated, especially the pulpit which is a fine example of the early colonial work. The pulpit floor is about five and one half feet above the first floor of the building. The pulpit shows fine raised panelling. There is a sounding board supported by fluted pilasters which have been marbleized. The arched window at the rear of the pulpit is curtained. Directly below the pulpit is the deacons' seat.

The box pews and the balcony rail are panelled. The first floor pews are painted gray, those in the balcony are unfinished pine, mellowed to a rich brown. The pews have seats on three sides. A singing gallery in the balcony has been remodelled. Plain board seats are arranged around the outside walls of the balcony and these are said to have been placed there for the slaves of the community.

Other Existing Records

"Old Colonial Houses in Maine" by Emma Huntington Nason, 1908
"The Maine Book" by Henry E. Dunnack (Photograph of Exterior of Church)
Miscellaneous Portland Newspaper clippings in custody of the
Maine Historical Society Library in Portland, Maine.

Additional Data

No accurate church records have been kept, hence it is difficult to obtain a true history of the building.

A bronze memorial tablet was placed on the church in 1936 by the Pemaquid Chapter, D. A. R.

There is a Pewter Communion Set which is owned by the congregation of this church. The Communion Service consists of one bowl (Alms bowl), two Wine Flagon for Communion Wine, two Plates (or Patens) for the Bread, and four Beakers for Serving Wine to Communicants. A letter received by Miss Alice E. Oliver of Damariscotta, Maine from an Art Dealer (Wm. Bruford & Son, Ltd., 241 High Street, Exeter, England) is quoted as follows in reference to this Communion Set:

"As to the date of the Service (the marks are not very clear), but we think we are as near the date and maker as possible, viz: Thomas Cary, London, 1687, and probably it was taken to America during the troublesome times of that period and that it came from the Congregational Church or Meeting House of the members of this sect at Bristol. It may have been given by one of the Walpoles. Also it is curious to note and we have enclosed a photograph of a group of four two handled goblets that we knew came from a Bristol Congregational Church and a Walpole may have given them for use in place of the Pewter set that was missing. This place of worship has long since disappeared from Castle Green, Bristol (England).

To substantiate the fact that the set was used by this sect, we may say that the custom was for a table to be placed in the midst of the meeting house or church and the communicants seated themselves about it. The Communion Service was placed on the table and the Pastor stood at its head asking a blessing upon the Elements and the People. The Wine was poured into the three Beaker Cups from the Flagon and handed to the people by the Deacons, the Bread was first taken, then the Wine, and at the conclusion of the Communion, the Bowl was passed to them for any Alms they could give. Later on as the places of worship improved and were filled with Pews in which the people were seated, the Deacons carried, first the Bread and then the Wine to them and they passed the Trenchers and Cups to each other, meanwhile the minister stood at the end of the aisle and read portions of Scripture and Prayers suitable for the office."

Eleanor E. Jannell

Approved: Josiah J. Tubby

March 3, 1937